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DJIA **24370.24** -0.22% ▼Nasdaq **7031.83** 0.16% ▲U.S. 10 Yr -5/32 Yield **2.879%** ▼Crude Oil **51.96** 1.88% ▲Euro **1.1318** -0.01% ▼

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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BUSINESS

McDonald's to Trim Antibiotics From Its Beef

Consumer advocates expect fast-food chain's decision to prompt broader industry changes



McDonald's said earlier this year that it was removing artificial ingredients from the buns, cheese and sauce on its best-known hamburgers in the U.S. The fast-food chain also began making quarter-pound burgers with fresh—rather than frozen—beef in the U.S. PHOTO: GENE J. PUSKAR/ASSOCIATED PRESS

By Julie Jargon

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McDonald's Corp. [MCD -0.57%](#) ▼ plans to reduce the use of antibiotics in its global beef supply in the next few years, a tougher task than removing their use from other types of meat.

The Chicago-based company said Tuesday that it will take two years to decide how much of the antibiotics important to human health it will be able to remove from beef. McDonald's said it would work with meat suppliers in its 10 largest beef-sourcing markets, including the U.S.

McDonald's and many other fast-food chains already have eliminated the use of such antibiotics in chicken in the U.S., and McDonald's is aiming to do so in other markets around the world.

Reducing the use of such antibiotics in beef has been harder to do, given McDonald's scale and the smaller number of suppliers that produce beef without the medicine.

Cattle live longer than chickens, increasing their chances of getting sick and needing antibiotic treatment. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, 43% of the medically important antibiotics sold to the U.S. livestock sector go to the beef industry, compared with only 6% for chicken.

Wendy's Co., which said it uses beef from younger and healthier cattle, said Tuesday that it sourced nearly 20% of its beef this year from a group of producers that have each committed to a 20% reduction in antibiotics fed to their cattle.

Other restaurant companies including Chipotle Mexican Grill Inc., Panera Bread Co. and Doctor's Associates Inc.'s Subway chain also have either reduced antibiotics used in beef or committed to do so.

The World Health Organization has said that antibiotic resistance is the one of the biggest threats to human health globally. Consumer advocacy groups lauded the McDonald's move, saying that as the largest U.S. beef purchaser, McDonald's will force the industry to change.

Since Steve Easterbrook became chief executive nearly four years ago, McDonald's has been making a number of changes aimed at becoming what it calls a "better McDonald's." Earlier this year, the company said it was removing artificial ingredients from the buns, cheese and sauce on its best-known hamburgers in the U.S. It also began making quarter-pound burgers with fresh, rather than frozen, beef in the U.S.

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